

CLEAN AIR AT WHAT COST?

China's green transition is often perceived as a lesson in authoritarian efficiency. In just a few years, the state managed to improve air quality, contain dissent, and restructure local industry. Much of this was achieved through top-down, "blunt force" solutions, such as forcibly shuttering or destroying polluting factories. This book argues that China's blunt force regulation is actually a sign of weak state capacity and ineffective bureaucratic control. Integrating case studies with quantitative evidence, it shows how widespread industry shutdowns are used, not to scare polluters into respecting pollution standards, but to scare bureaucrats into respecting central orders. These measures have improved air quality in almost all Chinese cities, but at immense social and economic cost. This book delves into the negotiations, trade-offs, and day-to-day battles of local pollution enforcement to explain why governments employ such costly measures, and what this reveals about a state's powers to govern society.

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CLEAN AIR AT WHAT COST?
The Rise of Blunt Force Regulation
in China

Denise Sienli van der Kamp
University of Oxford



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For Deirdre van Dijk-van der Kamp and Mak Shui Ping

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ABBREVIATIONS

APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
BFR	blunt force regulation
CCDI	Central Commission for Discipline Inspection
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
DENR	Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (Philippines)
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency (USA)
EPB	Environmental Protection Bureau (China)
FDI	foreign direct investment
GDP	gross domestic product
KME	key monitored enterprises
MEE	Ministry of Environment and Ecology
MEP	Ministry of Environmental Protection (old name for MEE until 2018)
MIIT	Ministry of Industry and Information Technology
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NRDC	National Reform and Development Commission
PITI	Pollution Information Transparency Index
RMB	renminbi (Chinese Currency)
SME	small and medium firms
SO ₂	sulfur dioxide
SOE	state-owned enterprises
USD	United States dollars